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LEANNE MYNOTT
MANAGER EXAMINATION SUPPORT
AND SALES

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Evolution Broadcast Pty Limited

PROVISIONAL SPECIFICATION

Invention Title:

Broadcast Control

The invention is described in the following statement:

Technical Field

The invention relates to broadcast control. In particular it relates to a broadcast control apparatus for visual data, and a broadcast control apparatus for the replay of pre-recorded visual data. The invention further relates to a system for broadcast control
5 and a method for broadcast control.

Background Art

Television production involves assembling source material such as the input from one or more cameras, video and audio into playlists or sequences being playlists
10 with defined transitions, to create a program. How the sequences are assembled depends on whether the program is intended for live broadcast or whether it is pre-recorded for broadcast at a later period in time. Source material for live broadcast is captured from multiple cameras, assembled and then broadcast directly from a control room. Source material for pre-recorded broadcast may be retrieved from an archival
15 facility, assembled into a program and then stored for broadcast at a later date. Figure 1 illustrates an overview of the production and broadcast process.

The assembly of source material occurs in the control room which is configurable in three different ways; as a studio control room, an outside broadcast control room or a flyaway control room. Studio control rooms are typically a fixed
20 facility within a building, controlling signals from cameras and microphones from a studio floor. Outside Broadcast control rooms are constructed in a vehicle such as a truck or van and generally deployed for sporting and entertainment events. The picture and sound signal from an outside broadcast van can be transmitted back to the TV station by microwave radio link, satellite or fibre optics. Flyaway control rooms, like
25 outside broadcast control rooms, are portable, are generally used for outside broadcasts. Advantageously, flyaway control rooms are configured to break down into smaller components that can be packed into road cases, shipped to a location and reassembled for a specific event.

Typically, for an outside broadcast control room, the production crew is made
30 up of at least twelve people, excluding camera operators. Table 1 lists each crew member and their associated responsibilities.

In the control room, the director co-ordinates and issues commands to the crew according to a storyboard. The director usually communicates with the crew via an intercom system. The director views on a first bank of television monitors the pictures
35 coming from each camera. Typically a monitor is available for each source. Each camera operator works to pre-agreed guidelines and responds to the director during the

production to ensure that the necessary picture is on the respective monitor as requested by the director. The director's assistant notes the timing and time code of each event captured by the cameras, which events from particular cameras the director may require later for editing, and advises the director on the overall timing of the production.

5

Role	#	Description
Director	1	Controls all aspects of the production, directing how and when sources are combined and assembled into final program. No significant equipment operated. Primarily directs other operators.
Director's Assistant	1	Assists the Director in timing and logging of events and in providing graphic information. Usually operates graphics generator.
Vision Switcher	1	Operates a vision switching panel and video effects unit under Director's commands.
Technical Manager	1	Technical responsibility for program content during production. Operates a range of technical monitoring equipment.
Broadcast Engineer	1	Responsible for setup and configuration of all equipment and troubleshooting/maintenance during production.
Camera Control Operators	2	Controls camera control unit CCU panels for each camera to ensure camera vision has correct exposure and colourimetry.
Audio Director	1	Operates an audio mixing panel to combine audio sources into completed program. Follows the video and Director's commands.
Videotape Operators	4	Record and replay video and audio sources using discrete magnetic storage devices. Generally videotape based with one video channel possible per machine.
Total	12	

Table 1.

The vision switcher, follows the director's commands and operates a large and complex vision switching panel positioned in front of the first bank of CRT monitors to mix and switch all the picture sources including live camera feeds, replays and graphics which make up a program. The vision switcher is also responsible for creating most of the digital video effects (DVE's) which are produced electronically by an associated

DVE panel which may be built into the vision switcher. Typically, the vision switcher panel is rigidly built into the control room. The vision switching system is typically made up of a mixer frame and complex panel. Memory recall procedures on the panel are usually complex with poorly identified descriptors requiring the operator to

5 remember significant detail about what is stored where, and requiring the operator to perform multiple keystrokes to recall programmed elements. Moreover, the vision switcher is usually required to integrate the individual clips into a sequence, adding the transitions in a manual process under the supervision of the Director. For example, labels which are to be tagged to a video clip may be manually noted on paper, or tagged

10 to the file using standard keyboard data entry. The logging of the clips and cue points are manually performed, typically using pen and paper and so the data is not available for re-use. Typically all switching has been performed using button presses on the panel.

The traditional configuration for the recording and replay of signals has been to

15 use up to four videotape recorders (VTR's) and respective videotape operators to selectively record and then replay portions of the event. Not all cameras are recorded nor are they recording constantly. The videotape operators are seated behind a second bank of video monitors and are each responsible for recording a description of the action from a particular camera together with an appropriate time for the backed up

20 tape. Traditional configurations use multiple video monitors for each operator, consuming space and generating significant heat loads. This also limits the flexibility with which the system can be located. Due to the area required for this activity, the video tape section is located away from the Director and communication is effected using talkback systems. This results in much additional activity merely to co-ordinate

25 the two functions. An additional supervising operator typically monitors the activity of recording and replaying and assists the Director with editorial decisions on which source is to be replayed and in what order.

Videotape operators are further responsible for queuing the tape for replay whenever the director requires. To be able to do this, the videotape operators have to

30 pull out their records, check the position on the tape where the particular event of interest happened, cue it ready for replay of the event and tell the vision switcher that they are ready. The videotape operator not only selects and plays the correct tape, but also gives regular time updates until the end of the video playback.

The graphics operator is responsible for queuing in graphics such as a scoreline,

35 players' names, and any other text or graphic which needs to be generated on the spot.

Having instructed the videotape operators to cue a particular replay, the director will then instruct the vision switcher to select which camera angle is most appropriate. Understanding instructions from the director, the vision switcher will also add the appropriate graphics to each of the replays.

5 Just as the vision switcher mixes and switches picture sources, the audio director works from a mixing desk in the audio room, mixing sound signals from different sources and switching from one source to another. Also working in the control room are the camera control operators who have technical control over the cameras.

Figure 2 illustrates a control room of a typical traditional outside broadcast van.
10 The control room is segregated into various areas. In the video area, workstations are erected for the director, the director's assistant and the vision switcher. To one side of the video area are multiple workstations for the videotape operators to record and archive source material. To the other side of the video area is the area designated for production and beside that the audio area. The workstations are built into desks
15 primarily due to their size and the need to associate them directly with fixed, wall-mounted monitoring systems for the video and audio signals. As a result, certain operators are limited to certain areas.

Behind the video area is the engineering area. Traditional systems do not provide any centralised monitoring or system management. The engineer must address
20 each device individually and generally has to wait for the results of a device failure to become evident rather than be prompted that a failure is imminent or has occurred. Setups must be duplicated and re-set each time an event is undertaken. Depending on the device, individual operators may carry personalised operational disks with them to boot up the device with their preferences but generally no central management of this
25 takes place.

The standard equipment used in television production equipment has not changed significantly in decades. Control rooms have remained static over time, and even though individual pieces of equipment have evolved, the pattern of staffing and the nature of the roles they perform have not changed.

30 In recent years, the television industry worldwide has commenced a transition to digital technology, in both production and transmission environments. Digital technology has brought with it additional features in some equipment, and has also supported the development of some new tools. However, the basic functions of the equipment have remained much the same.

35 Television has been, and is, subjected to increasing cost pressures for a number of reasons including the large size of the production crew the increasing cost of basic

production equipment, increased competition for viewers from a dramatic increase in the number of channels for distribution; changes in viewing patterns; and escalating costs for program rights – for sporting events in particular.

5 Disclosure of Invention

In a first aspect, the invention is a broadcast control apparatus for visual data, the apparatus comprising:

a touch screen display panel operable to receive and display visual data simultaneously in real time from a plurality of visual sources; and

10 a touch screen graphical panel for the retrieval of digital video effects from a digital video effects register;

whereby visual data from at least one of the visual sources is selectable for preview by finger pressure on the associated portion of the touch screen display panel and the selected data is modifiable by combination with a retrieved digital video effect.

15

The broadcast control apparatus may further include a programmable panel having a plurality of programmable keys, each one of which is able to be programmed to retrieve a digital video effect. The programmable panel may be positioned proximate the touch screen display panel, may be incorporated into the touch screen display panel
20 or may be incorporated into a control panel. The control panel may include dials and further keys to enable switching between visual sources. The control panel may be a customised vision switching panel.

The selected data may be modifiable by finger pressure on a portion of the touch screen graphical panel that is associated with the digital video effect. Alternatively, the
25 selected data may be modifiable by use of a programmable key, or directly from the touch screen graphical panel.

A second touch screen display panel may be operable to receive and display further visual data or alternatively to view visual data for output. The touch screen display panels may be mounted on an electrically operated arm so as to move relative
30 to the control panel.

Selected visual data may be cued to the touch screen graphical panel for transmission. Transmission may be broadcast live or may be stored for broadcast at a later date. Alternatively, the selected visual data may be previewed on the first touch screen display panel, on the second touch screen display panel, or on a screen
35 independent of the broadcast control apparatus. Such a screen may be a plasma screen or may be one or more of a bank of monitors.

Digital video effects include, but are not limited to, snapshots, memories, timelines, transistions such as warps, fades, expansions, wipes, curls, overlays, notations, borders and chromaFX. Transitions between a first and second source may be effected by applying finger pressure on the associated portion of the touch screen display panel that represents a first source and dragging that source to a different portion of the touch screen display panel associated with a second source.

The digital video effects may be pre-programmed, named and stored for later recall. Optionally, the digital video effects may be programmed as they are needed. Programmable keys loaded with digital video effects may appear back-lit in green, indicating to the operator that the key is ready for operation. Keys which have yet to be loaded and which are therefore available for programming may appear backlit red.

The visual source may be input from video cameras, videotape recorders or disk servers, computer generated sources, remote feeds, or the like.

The broadcast control apparatus may further include a display module programmable to store a plurality of touch screen configurations. The configuration of all the visual data from respective visual sources on the touch screen display panel may be resized depending on the number of visual sources operating at any one time. A plurality of screen configurations may be programmed into one or more of the programmable keys. Advantageously, the Director is able to view all streams of visual data operating at any one time so as to select the visual data most applicable to the job requirements.

It is envisioned that the apparatus in accordance with the first aspect of the invention, will be operated by the Director.

The broadcast apparatus in accordance with the first aspect may be operational in two modes, a set up mode and an operation mode. In the set up mode the broadcast apparatus may include pre-programming digital video effects. In the operation mode, selection of sources and transition between sources are performed.

In a second aspect, the invention is a broadcast control apparatus for the replay of pre-recorded visual data, the apparatus comprising:

a touch screen display panel operable to simultaneously playback more than one stream of visual data from a storage unit, the visual data sourced from a plurality of visual sources;

a touch screen graphical panel for the retrieval of digital video effects from a digital video effects register; and

a control panel in communication with the touch screen panels, the control panel including a plurality of programmable keys, each one of which is able to be programmed to retrieve a digital video effect;

whereby playback of visual data from the storage unit is able to be modified by
5 combination with a retrieved digital video effect.

It is envisioned that the apparatus in accordance with the second aspect of the invention, will be operated by a replay and effects director. Visual data may be modified with a digital video effect by use of a programmed key from the control panel
10 or a portion of the touch screen graphical panel that is associated with the digital video effect.

The broadcast control apparatus in accordance with the second aspect of the invention may comprise a second touch screen display panel for output video monitoring. The storage unit may be a record and playback device or any device that
15 stores and plays back via electronic, optical magnetic, or other live media or storage media. For example the storage unit may be a server system which comprises a plurality of RAID disk drives.

The control panel may further comprise one or more of a speed control section for at least controlling the rate of play of a visual source or transition, a timecode
20 section for displaying the length of a visual source, a cueing section for marking and searching of cues and for the navigation within the storage device and a slow-motion section.

The touch screen graphical panel may be used to build playlists and sequences and may be used to define video clips.

25 Advantageously, the use of the touch screens in conjunction with the pre-programmed effects keys provides an alternative to large banks of fixed monitors, thereby minimising space.

The touch screen display panels may be positioned on a motorised arm to enable the panels to be brought in front of, or to the rear of the control panel, and therefore,
30 closer to, or away from, the operator.

The invention further includes a system for broadcast control comprising:
a first apparatus comprising a touch screen display panel operable to receive and display visual data simultaneously in real-time from the plurality of visual sources; and
35 a touch screen graphical panel for the retrieval of digital video effects from a digital video effects register; whereby visual data from at least one of the visual sources is

selectable for preview by finger pressure on the associated portion of the touch screen display panel and the selected data is modifiable by combination with a retrieved digital video effect;

a storage unit for storing visual data from a plurality of visual sources;

5 a second apparatus comprising a touch screen display panel operable to simultaneously playback more than one stream of visual data from the storage unit and to produce an output; a touch screen graphical panel for the retrieval of digital video effects from a digital video effects register; and a control panel in communication with the touch screen panels, the control panel including a plurality of programmable keys,
10 each one of which is able to be programmed with a retrieved digital video effect; whereby playback of visual data from the storage unit is able to be modified by combination with a retrieved digital video effect;

whereby the first apparatus is operable to edit modified visual data with output from the second apparatus for transmission.

15

The first apparatus of the system may further include a programmable panel in communication with the touch screen panels, the programmable panel having a plurality of programmable keys, each one of which is able to be programmed to retrieve a digital video effect. The programmable panel may be positioned proximate the touch
20 screen display panel, may be incorporated into the touch screen display panel or may be incorporated into a control panel. The control panel may include dials and further keys to enable switching between visual sources. The control panel may be a customised vision switching panel.

The output may be modified or unmodified visual data. The touch screen
25 graphical panel of the second apparatus may have control over one or more of the plurality of programmable keys on the control panel of the second apparatus for the execution of video effects or for defining video clips and playlists. This may enable the second apparatus to edit modified visual data with output from the first apparatus.

The selected data may be modifiable by finger pressure on a portion of the touch screen
30 graphical panel that is associated with the digital video effect. Alternatively, the selected data may be modifiable by use of a programmable key, or directly from the touch screen graphical panel.

The system may further include central control unit panels which may be provided for each camera to ensure that that camera's vision has correct exposure and
35 colourimetry. The system may further include an audio mixing panel to combine audio sources into completed program.

The invention further includes a method for broadcast control comprising the steps of:

- storing digital video effects in a digital video effects register;
- displaying on a touch screen display panel of a first apparatus visual data
- 5 simultaneously in real-time from a plurality of visual sources; a first operator
- selecting visual data from at least one of the visual sources by finger pressure on the associated portion of the touch screen display panel of the first apparatus; the first operator
- retrieving a digital video effect from the digital video effects register; and the
- 10 first operator
- modifying the selected visual data with the retrieved digital video effect to produce a first output and cueing the first output for transmission.

- The method may further comprise a second set of steps including:
- 15 storing visual data from at least a portion of the plurality of visual sources; a first operator
 - replaying streams of stored visual data simultaneously on a touch screen display panel of a second apparatus ; a second operator
 - selecting a stream of visual data by finger pressure on the associated portion of
 - 20 the touch screen display panel of the second apparatus; the second operator
 - retrieving a digital video effect from a digital video effects register; the second operator
 - modifying the selected visual data with the digital video effect to produce a second output; and the first operator
 - 25 cueing the second output relative to the first output to create a sequence for transmission.

The second set of steps may be applied whenever the first operator is wanting to insert historic video footage into live footage. The first operator instructs the second

30 operator to source a particular piece of footage and modify it with a particular transition. The first operator is then able to create a sequence of footage for broadcast transmission.

All the visual data from the sources may be stored. The step of the first operator retrieving a digital video effect may comprise the operator activating a touch screen

35 graphical panel or activating a key programmed with the digital video effect. The second operator, or a third operator may be responsible for pre-programming the key

with the digital video effect. Alternatively the first operator may program the key during operation.

The method may include the step of configuring or re-configuring the touch screen display panel of a first apparatus to display the plurality of visual sources.

5 The first operator may effect a transition such as a wipe by finger pressure on the associated portion of the touch screen display panel representative of one source dragging that source to another portion of the touch screen display panel representative of another source.

10 The first operator and second operator may access the same digital video effects register or may access different digital video effects registers.

The created sequences may be transmitted live or may be stored for broadcast at a later date.

A further advantage of at least one example of the present invention is that the number of operators required is reduced and the workflow is changed significantly.
15 Changes are supported by reducing the size and complexity of the equipment, while maintaining the level of equipment functionality and therefore the quality level of the production. Staff savings may advantageously flow on to significant savings in travel, accommodation and meals. Simplification of the equipment is also likely to enable the sourcing of essential staff from local markets, rather than having to travel to remote
20 locations from the home base.

Further savings are advantageously achieved from the reduction in overall equipment size. The equipment can be deployed in a smaller physical space, requires less power, generates less heat, and requires less air-conditioning. In an example such as an outside broadcast situation, travelling becomes more flexible and can potentially
25 be accomplished using existing crew to drive, rather than engaging specialist drivers.

Brief Description of Drawings

As known in the art:

Fig. 1 is a schematic diagram of production and transmission methods; and
30 Fig. 2 is a schematic diagram of an outside broadcast van.

An example of the invention will now be described with reference to the accompanying drawings; in which:

Fig. 3a is a perspective view of the Director's control panel and touch screens in an extended position;

35 Fig. 3b is a perspective view of the Director's control panel and touch screens in a reduced position;

Fig. 4 is a perspective view of the RFX director's control panel and touch screens;

Fig. 5 is a schematic diagram of an outside broadcast utilising the principles of the present invention;

5 Fig. 6 is simplified block diagram of the operation of the broadcast control process; and

Fig. 7 is a flow diagram illustrating the operations of the Director and the RFX director.

10 **Best Mode for Carrying Out the Invention**

In accordance with the invention, a radically different approach to vision mixing has been adopted. First, the task of switching picture sources is performed by the Director rather than a vision switcher whose role is rendered obsolete. In order to support this, the user interface of the former vision mixer is significantly reduced in its
15 complexity of operation and in its size. Furthermore, operation of the new vision mixer is partially based on the triggering of pre-programmed events or timelines.

Second, a new role, that of the replay and effects (RFX) director, renders the role of the videotape operators obsolete. The RFX director is aided by a module which includes a control panel and one or more user interfaces. The Director, his or her
20 assistant, and the RFX director all work in close proximity to one another.

Figures 3a and 3b illustrate the Director's module 20 in extended and reduced configurations respectively. The module has three LCD touch screens 32, 34 and 36, the latter being a Graphical User Interface GUI. A soft key (programmable key) panel 38 is provided beneath the left hand side touch screen 32. The module also includes a
25 control panel 30 and mixer frame (not shown).

Touch Screens

LCD touch screens 32 and 34 are mounted on electrically operated arms 40 and display input source video and output video respectively. Screens 32 and 34 enable a matrix display of up to sixteen video signals per screen which primarily display the
30 digital output from cameras, although the output can be displayed from video tape recorders, DVDs, replay and playback devices, or any device that stores, records, generates or plays back via electronic, optical, magnetic, or other storage media. The size and positioning on the matrix of each video source is varied contextually according to the sources being manipulated at the time. Each area is configured with a symbol of
35 the associated signal source for easy identification. In this example, screen 36 is

mounted on an incline and is used as a touch screen GUI for operational commands and to run a sidepanel application which is required for setup and execution.

The sidepanel application includes a pre-programmed effects register which has over one hundred configurable effects which are displayed on the side menu area of the GUI 36. One or more keys 38 can be simply loaded with the required effect from the register of effects. This may occur during pre-production or production. Such configured keys 38 appear back-lit in green, indicating full readiness. These effects can then be recalled and executed by the relatively inexperienced director. Other effects may be selected during production and the available keys 38 appear backlit red. The use of the screens in conjunction with the pre-programmed effects keys provides an alternative to large banks of fixed monitors, thereby minimising space. Selected visual data for transmission is cued to the GUI 36 for transmission.

Soft Keys

The soft keys 38 comprise a set of thirteen programmable backlit alpha-numeric LCD pushbuttons. The soft keys 38 are linked via software to the mixer frame and are programmable to enable a range of functions. Whilst not limited to the function described, in the Director's module they are primarily used to execute pre-programmed functions such as snapshots, memories and timelines within the mixer. The soft keys 38 can also be programmed to include control over other devices, such as the video servers or audio mixer, to execute more complex effects than those normally available within a vision mixer engine. They can also be used to control the display module (referred to below) to effect changes to the display configuration on any of the LCD touch screens. More particularly, the display is used to show the Director or RFX director a descriptor of the specific function stored within the key at that time, and to show the status of that function. A button text is used for the descriptor and backlighting the key is used to show the status. The combinations of each are used contextually to give the Director or RFX director a clear indication of function status.

The keys 38 are assignable in banks. The banks are switched using a menu key at the right hand end of the panel 30, which when pressed brings up a series of menu keys on the keys 38. This enables processes such as the assignment of functions to the individual keys or banks of keys, selection of other banks of functions (stored in groups of twelve), or setup functions for the menu itself. These functions are typically performed in conjunction with the operator's GUI screen 36.

Mixer

The mixer frame is a commercially available frame such as one developed by Thomson. The mixer frame comprises a series of PC boards within a rack mount frame

and a series of inputs and output connections to those boards for serial digital video signals. It effectively performs the transitions between signals and adds video effects as instructed by the Director. The mixer frame is able to be programmed in advance, enabling the operator to store and recall snapshots, memories and timelines. Snapshots
 5 are mixer configurations that position specific functions and statuses according to operator preferences. Memories are stored effects that can be recalled and triggered when required, and timelines are a series of events that can be recalled and triggered event by event when required. The RFX director is required for setup and execution phases.

10 Display Module

The display module comprises multiple printed circuit boards in rack mounted frame, with multiple video inputs and outputs on the rear panel. The display module is designed to accept serial digital video input signals, to re-size and shift the image, and to enable the display of multiple images concurrently on the LCD screens.
 15 Programming enables up to sixty four different screen configurations to be stored. Recall and display of different configuration is instantaneous and does not require redraw time. This is in contrast to most similar devices which are not designed to change rapidly between display configurations and are therefore not suited to this production application.

20 The display is configured in two layers, with the background layer underneath the video layer. The background layer comprises the base graphic layer, frames around the video and any identification text, whilst the video layer comprises the individually sized and positioned video windows.

Engineering Module

25 The engineering module comprises a standard PC interface running a combination of software. This module performs two primary functions: system monitoring and diagnostics and centralised management.

The system monitoring and diagnostics is umbrella software that brings together a range of other software and communications links from discrete third party devices.
 30 The majority of these devices has a diagnostic connection that enables the status of the device to be viewed and/or controlled remotely, generally using a web browser. When an alert is displayed, the engineer can enter the device-specific application, to correct the fault and adjust the device if necessary.

The centralised management system is software that brings together the setup
 35 and configuration of each discrete device within the system. Each device typically has

a hierarchy of parameters that are configured on a more or less frequent basis depending on their nature. Typically this hierarchy might be represented thus:

- Initiation & Installation - upon first initiating the device and installing into a system
- System Setup - to enable operation within a system of other devices, for example to integrate into a network
- Event Setup - parameters tailored to a specific location or event, for example configuration of the router for the number of cameras
- Program Setup - parameters tailored to a specific program, for example video effects tailored for a specific look
- Operator Setup - specific preferences of individual operators, for example placement of macro keys or speed behaviour of the spin knob on the RFX module's control panel.

The centralised management system integrates this matrix of parameters into specific files that can be used to facilitate easy and fast setup of the system prior to events, and the capture of adjustments to the setup during events. This enable setups to be re-used at similar events in the future.

Operation

The Directors Module is operated in two different modes – setup and operation. Setup is intended to be performed by an experienced Vision Switcher and allows digital video effects DVEs, to be programmed, named and stored for later recall. DVE's include, but are not limited to, mixer snapshots, memories, timelines, warps, fades, expansions, wipes, curls, overlays, notations, borders and chromaFX. Programming of the DVE's is achieved using the soft keys 38 and the GUI 36.

Operation of the Director's module is intended to be performed by the Director and has two sub-modes: the 'Touch Switching' mode and 'Panel' mode.

In Touch Switching mode, screens 32 and 34 are brought forward using the electrically operated arms 40, positioning them closer to the Director and over the top of the control panel 30 (figure 3b). The selection of sources and transitions between sources is done by touching the required vision on the touch screen 32, or by touching specific menu buttons on the display screens 32, 34. Touch Switching mode also uses the soft keys 38 to perform other aspects of the transitions and complex effects. These keys are labelled with user-defined descriptive names and enable the completion of complex effects without the need for the Director to have the skills to manipulate a traditional vision switching panel. Direct cuts between sources can be effected by touching the relevant source. Other programmed transitions such as wipes or dissolves can be effected by touching and dragging the existing source on one section of the

matrix to another source on another section of the matrix. For all but the most complex productions the traditional vision switching panel is avoided as all functionality is controllable through the touch screens 32, 34 and the soft keys 38.

In Panel mode, screens 32 and 34 are sent back using the electrically operated arms 40, exposing the control panel 30 in full and positioning the screens 32, 34 at a longer reach position but still able to be touched for switching purposes (figure 3a). The majority of the switching is performed using the panel in this mode. The design of the panel 30 follows a number of the traditional patterns set by existing and past switching products but also has a number of different features that enable the use of fewer rows of keys and fewer modules of control keys in areas such as the keyers and memories. In both Panel mode and Touch Switching mode, both the panel keys 39 and the touch screen switching are enabled, along with the soft keys 38. All three components can be used in the balance desired by the Director to switch the program.

Should a Director be faced with a complex program that is beyond their switching skills, then an experienced Vision Switcher can be used to operate the panel 30 and the Director can assume their traditional position beside the Vision Switcher.

RFX Module

As illustrated in Fig. 4, the RFX module 50 comprises three touch-driven LCD screens 51, 52, 53, one control panel 54, RS422 router and scalable video server system (not shown). The RFX module 50 enables a single RFX director to perform the function formerly performed by four videotape operators. The RFX director's control panel 54 further includes pushbuttons, speed control and keyboard.

Touch Screens

The first and second touch screens 51, 52 are mounted on a fixed arm and display source video, i.e they are used for input video monitoring and for output video monitoring respectively. This third screen 53 is mounted on an incline to the RFX director's right hand side. The third screen is a touch screen GUI for viewing menu commands and lists of video files available for manipulation. The GUI and soft keys also controls one of the effects rows on the Director's module, making the full range of video effects from the Director's module available directly to the RFX director for inclusion in packaged replays, which are delivered back to the Director. In contrast to the traditional situation where replay operators supply raw video to the Vision switcher for manipulation and packaging, the RFX director is advantageously able to supply fully packaged replays that allow the workload to be distributed flexibly between the Director and RFX director as required by the production.

Control Panel

The RFX modules control panel 54 has a number of components and functional areas that enable the control and manipulation of up to twelve channels of video server output.:

- 5 i. Soft keys are a programmable resource and can perform a range of functions. They are intended to allow custom functions to be assigned according to the specific application of the user. The soft keys are programmable in a number of different ways. Primarily they are used as specific effects triggers, to text tag cues and clips with a descriptor which describe the event being captured at the time. Examples of this
10 include a team or player name, a sports event such as a 'try' or 'goal', a specific quote or action from a performer, or a point in a song. For example, by pressing labels marked "goal" and "Sydney" a tag is created to the particular portion of video. The soft keys are also used to reconfigure screen layouts. The use of soft keys simplifies and speeds the process significantly.
- 15 ii. A Speed Control section provides a standard spin knob that has jog, variable speed and shuttle functions available by selecting the appropriate key. Each of these functions has user-definable speed parameters. The spin knob is generally used to control the server channels selected on the Output Screen but can also be assigned, using a "Line" key to control the on-line channel/s to allow variable speed control in
20 forward and reverse modes as well as a jog mode for frame-by-frame analysis.
- iii. A Timecode section displays the current clip timecode on an LED readout and allows the entry of specific timecodes to support clip searching and the trimming of existing clips.
- iv. A Transport section provides standard control over the server transports
- 25 v. A Cueing section provides keys for the marking and searching of cues and the rapid navigation within files on the server.
- vi. A Slomo section provides a T-Bar style control for the control of speeds between -200% and +200%. This is typically used within the 0-100% range although other speeds are assignable temporarily using a combination of keystrokes or as presets
30 using the setup menus on the GUI 53.

Server System

The server system is a commercially available frame such as one developed by Thomson. It comprises a number of RAID disk drives, together with the appropriate codecs and controllers to enable the ingest and encoding, decoding and output of serial
35 digital video and AES audio signals. The video signals are recorded with embedded audio as compressed MPEG2 data files. This system removes the need for video

operators to control record modes and to switch inputs for selective recording. Provisions are made such that a Master Record can be made to videotape or other medium, in the format required by the producer and to enable the producer to leave immediately following production with an editable copy of their event. The tape format is compatible with data transfer protocols that allow greater than real time transfer such as SDTI / DVCPRO to minimise time during post-event archiving.

The server system is controlled via two separate paths – the first being an internet protocol network connection and the second via the RS422 router. The RS422 ports carry panel to server communication using the Odetics protocol and the network connection carries communication using the Odetics-X and ProFile Native protocols.

Operation and relationship to the Directors Module

The RFX director is primarily responsible for the introduction of replay material and to set up record and playback with loaded effects via the RFX module 50. The RFX director works closely with the director, sitting alongside the director to enable all the positive benefits of in-person communication. Positioning the director and RFX director alongside each other enables a close working understanding to develop, where each knows clearly what the other has in progress and planned.

The RFX module 50 provides the RFX director with control over the inputs to and outputs from the server system. Control can be effected over individual server channels or groups of channels and this control can be selected as required, typically being changed constantly through a production. Pre-defined sets for control can be defined and allocated to on-screen buttons or to soft keys to assist rapid channel group selection.

Typically the RFX director's module 50 is placed in record at the commencement of the production and all camera outputs are recorded for the duration of the event. As described, the first touch screen 51 displays a matrix display of the inputs from each of the visual signal sources, which are generally cameras. The picture seen by each camera will be displayed on this first screen whilst the RFX director is using the second touch screen 52 for replays and inserts, as well as for viewing the outputs of each of the video server channels. The selection of the channels to be controlled at any point in time is accomplished by touching the image on the touch screen. Programmed sets of these controlled groups can be defined and made available on single touch buttons.

The RFX director has the ability to lay cues on the record side of the server and to review these cues, developing them into clips, or playlists of clips or sequences. The RFX director can add descriptive tags to cues or clips using the soft keys on the control

panel 54 and can navigate quickly between banks of these soft key tags to provide a wide range of descriptors.

The GUI screen 53 is used to define clips and build playlists and sequences. Using the control panel 54 to locate and control specific clips, the RFX director builds
 5 finished events and places them in an output buffer, from where the Director can put the event to line. Once on line, both the Director and the RFX director have control over the event, and can control when it steps through to the next part of the playlist or sequence, automatically triggering the transition/s as defined.

The output of the RFX module 50 is passed to the Director's module 20 and is
 10 thus made available to the Director. Communication with the Director, previously performed using a talkback system, is now achieved face to face. The small size of the module allows co-location of the Director and RFX director, eliminating the need for talkback between these two key operators.

For both the Director's and RFX director's screens, screen splitting devices
 15 SSD's are employed to display multiple signals simultaneously and to enable instant switching between screen layouts. Furthermore, the SSD's enable the screens on which the images are displayed to be deployed as touch screens by tracking the position of the image and source and linking the operator's finger touch back to the source to support switching commands.

Furthermore, the SSD's drive the liquid crystal displays for close-range
 20 monitoring such that the relative image size and resolution are maintained at least at the levels in traditional monitor wall configurations. The operator can switch between various pre-programmed screen configurations to display the required sources according to the program component being worked on. All sources are available to the
 25 operator through the use of router outputs to feed the screen splitting device. Advantageously, massive reductions in weight, heat generation and power requirements result from the use of LCD's as compared to cathode ray tube monitor walls.

The staffing for an outside broadcast control room utilising the principles of the invention is illustrated in Table 2. Compared with the staffing of a prior art broadcast
 30 control room as shown in Table 1, the total number of operators is reduced and the roles which staff engage in are modified.

Role	Number	Description
Director	1	Controls all aspects of the production, directing how and when sources are combined and assembled into final program. Operates simplified vision switching panel and automation controls.

Role		Description
Replay & Effects Director (RFX)	1	Controls all recording and replays using video server system and automated Replays. Linked closely with the Director role. Second RFX operator required for very complex productions.
Director's Assistant	1	Assists the Director in timing and logging of events and in providing graphic information. Usually operates graphics generator.
Vision Switcher	0	Not required except for very complex productions.
Technical Manager	1	Technical responsibility for program content during production. Operates a range of technical monitoring equipment.
Broadcast Engineer	1	Responsible for setup and configuration of all equipment and troubleshooting / maintenance during production.
Camera Control Operators	2	Controls CCU panels for each camera to ensure camera vision has correct exposure and colourimetry.
Audio Director	1	Operates complex audio mixing panel to combine audio sources into completed program. Follows the video and Director's commands. Scope and complexity of equipment reduced significantly to reduce cost and size.
Videotape Operators	0	Not required.
Total	8	

Table 2.

Figure 5 illustrates a control room 60 of an outside broadcast van that embodies principles of the present invention. In contrast to figure 2, the video area 66 workstations are erected for the director, his or her assistant and the newly created role of the replay and effects, RFX director. Videotape operators and associated workstations as illustrated in figure 2 are now obsolete. To one side of the video area 62 is the audio area 64 and to the other side of the CCU/engineering area 62 is the area designated for production and transmission 66. The role of the Audio Director is designed to follow a more automated approach, focusing more heavily on intervention rather than constant active adjustment.

Figure 6 illustrates a simplified schematic diagram 80 of the broadcast control system embodying the invention. In addition to figure 5, the functionality and operation of the Director's module and the RFX's module is indicated in figure 7.

A number of field cameras 82 are deployed, each of which view a scene from different angles to be directly televised or recorded. In a football match for instance, a camera may be mounted on a dolly to track the movement of a player running down the field. Other cameras may be stationed along the length of the field so as to capture close-ups of players during events such as tackles and tries.

Each of the cameras 82 generate video signals which are input into a routing device 84 via camera control units 86 which ensures that the output from each camera has correct exposure and colourimetry. Server inputs and outputs are managed by router 84 so as to appear in fixed positions for the purposes of vision switching. As illustrated, signals from camera two are recorded onto server channel two in centralised storage area 88 and replayed on server channel twelve. All routed video signals are recorded to disk in the centralised storage area 88. The signals are passed through a fabric switch 90 which communicates with a non linear edit system 92.

The Director's module includes a plurality of input terminals. Depending on the number of field cameras employed, one or more of the Director's LCD touch screens receive video signals, from the router, step 200. The LCD screens are configured in a matrix arrangement such that signals from each camera are displayed in respective areas of the matrix of the LCD screens, step 202. In this way, the Director is able to continuously view the input from each camera and select which of the scenes are to be used for program output.

The Director is able to select video scenes on the near-field monitoring by touching the respective area of the matrix, step 204. Pre-programmed effect keys on the Director's control panel 30, are used to modify any of the chosen scenes, step 206.

The GUI 36 further enables production of a program output which carries the video signals to be presented for broadcast. The program output is adapted for connection to a television broadcasting apparatus in the case of live-to-air television program or to television recording apparatus in the case of a prerecorded program.

The RFX director's module 100 is in two-way communication with the Director's control panel 30 and with the video servers. The first touch screen 112 of the RFX interface screens 112, 114 and 116 is the similar in their configuration to that of the Director's screen 32 and displays a matrix of the inputs from each of the visual signal sources. The second LCD touch screen 114 is used for replays and inserts. To

assist with this functionality, the RFX directors control 110 panel has key controls which include pushbuttons, a fader and keyboard.

Upon directions from the Director, step 210, the RFX director replays a particular event captured by a number of cameras, step 212. The RFX director is able to modify replays by activating a pre-programmed key on the RFX director's control panel, step 214. The, or each scene is then sent for preview by the director on the plasma screen, step 216. The Director can then cue the selected scene to the GUI 36, step 218. This process is repeated until the program is complete. The cued program is then transmitted live or stored for future broadcast, step 220.

Whilst this example has been discussed in relation to a outside broadcast control room, it should be appreciate that such an example is only one of the many utilising the principles of the invention. The invention can also be applied to studio control rooms or flyaway controls rooms. Whilst it is anticipated that the majority of productions can be supported using a single RFX director, more complex events may require up to three RFX directors, each operating a module using a common RS422 router and server system with their own panel, and screens. Arbitration over the control of channel achieved using a concept where channels are assigned to a specific RFX director, and to be re-assigned must first be released by that operator to a free zone. Other detailed operations and layouts of controls may be designed to support the control of multiple channels. This is supported by the menus available on the RFX modules GUI screen.

Further development of the RFX module involves the integration of the sports scoring systems. These systems generate large volumes of descriptive data that can be used to describe the events being recorded. The system will capture this metadata and record it, capturing the timecode association with the footage. Scoring data can also be captured, allowing score graphics to be regenerated in post-production. Currently, this data is stored separately in a PC and is not associated with the footage of the event.

It will be appreciated by persons skilled in the art that numerous variations and/or modifications may be made to the invention as shown in the specific embodiments without departing from the spirit or scope of the invention as broadly described. The present embodiments are, therefore, to be considered in all respects as illustrative and not restrictive.

Dated this day of fourth day of April 2003

Evolution Broadcast Pty Limited
Patent Attorneys for the Applicant:
F B RICE & CO

CLAIMS

1. A broadcast control apparatus for visual data, the apparatus comprising:
a touch screen display panel operable to receive and display visual data simultaneously in real time from a plurality of visual sources; and
a touch screen graphical panel for the retrieval of digital video effects from a digital video effects register;
whereby visual data from at least one of the visual sources is selectable for preview by finger pressure on the associated portion of the touch screen display panel and the selected data is modifiable by combination with a retrieved digital video effect.
2. The broadcast control apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a control panel to enable switching between visual sources.
3. The broadcast control apparatus according to claim 2, further comprising a programmable panel having a plurality of programmable keys, each one of which is able to be programmed to retrieve a digital video effect.
4. The broadcast control apparatus according to claim 3, wherein the programmable panel is positioned proximate the touch screen display panel.
5. The broadcast control apparatus according to claim 3, wherein, the programmable panel is incorporated into the touch screen display panel.
6. The broadcast control apparatus according to claim 3, wherein, the programmable panel is incorporated into the control panel.
7. The broadcast control apparatus according to any one of claims 2 to 6, wherein the control panel is a customised vision switching panel.
8. The broadcast control apparatus according to any one of claims 2 to 7, wherein the selected data is modifiable by finger pressure on a portion of the touch screen graphical panel that is associated with the digital video effect.
9. The broadcast control apparatus according to any one of claims 3 to 6, wherein the selected data is modifiable by use of a programmable key, or directly from the touch screen graphical panel.

10. The broadcast control apparatus according to any one of claims 2 to 9, wherein at least one digital video effect is pre-programmed, named and stored for later recall.
11. The broadcast control apparatus according to any one of claims 2 to 10 wherein in use, digital video effects are programmed as they are needed.
12. The broadcast control apparatus according to claims 10 or 11, wherein a programmable key loaded with a digital video effect appears back-lit with a first colour indicating to an operator that the key is ready for operation.
13. The broadcast control apparatus according to claim 12, wherein keys which have yet to be loaded and which are therefore available for programming appear backlit with a second colour.
14. The broadcast control apparatus according to any one of claims 2 to 13, further comprising a second touch screen display panel operable to receive and display further visual data or to view visual data for output.
15. The broadcast control apparatus according to claim 14 wherein each touch screen display panel is mounted on a motorised arm so as to move relative to the control panel.
16. The broadcast control apparatus according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein selected visual data is able to be cued to the touch screen graphical panel for transmission.
17. The broadcast control apparatus according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein transitions between a first and second visual source are effected by applying finger pressure on the associated portion of the touch screen display panel that represents the first source and dragging that source to a different portion of the touch screen display panel associated with the second source.
18. The broadcast control apparatus according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the visual source is input from at least one of video cameras, videotape recorders, disk servers, computer generated sources, remote feeds, or the like.

19. The broadcast control apparatus according to any one of the preceding claims, further comprising a display module programmable to store a plurality of touch screen configurations.
20. The broadcast control apparatus according to claim 19, wherein the configuration of all the visual data from respective visual sources on the touch screen display panel is resizeable depending on the number of visual sources operating at any one time.
21. The broadcast control apparatus according to claim 19 when dependent on any one of claims 2 to 15, wherein a plurality of screen configurations are programmable into one or more of the programmable keys.
22. The broadcast control apparatus according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein in use, the apparatus is operational in a first set up mode and a second operational mode.
23. The broadcast control apparatus according to claim 22 when dependent on claim 10, wherein pre-programming digital video effects occurs in the set up mode.
24. The broadcast control apparatus according to claim 22 when dependent on claim 17, wherein in the operation mode selection of sources and transitions between sources are performed.
25. A broadcast control apparatus for the replay of pre-recorded visual data, the apparatus comprising:
 - a touch screen display panel operable to simultaneously playback more than one stream of visual data from a storage unit, the visual data sourced from a plurality of visual sources;
 - a touch screen graphical panel for the retrieval of digital video effects from a digital video effects register; and
 - a control panel in communication with the touch screen panels, the control panel including a plurality of programmable keys, each one of which is able to be programmed to retrieve a digital video effect;whereby playback of visual data from the storage unit is able to be modified by combination with a retrieved digital video effect.

26. The apparatus according to claim 25, wherein visual data is modifiable with a digital video effect by use of a programmed key from the control panel or a portion of the touch screen graphical panel that is associated with the digital video effect.
27. The apparatus according to claim 25 or claim 26, further comprising a second touch screen display panel to view visual data for output.
28. The apparatus according to any one of claims 25 to 27, wherein the control panel further comprises one or more of a speed control section for at least controlling the rate of play of a visual source or transition, a timecode section for displaying the length of a visual source, a cueing section for marking and searching of cues and for the navigation within the storage device and a slow-motion section.
29. The apparatus according to any one of claims 25 to 28, wherein the touch screen graphical panel is used to build playlists and sequences.
30. The apparatus according to any one of claims 25 to 29, wherein each touch screen display panel is mounted on a motorised arm to enable the panels to be brought in front of, or to the rear of the control panel, and therefore, closer to, or away from, an operator.
31. A system for broadcast control comprising:
 - a first apparatus comprising a touch screen display panel operable to receive and display visual data simultaneously in real-time from the plurality of visual sources; and a touch screen graphical panel for the retrieval of digital video effects from a digital video effects register; whereby visual data from at least one of the visual sources is selectable for preview by finger pressure on the associated portion of the touch screen display panel and the selected data is modifiable by combination with a retrieved digital video effect;
 - a storage unit for storing visual data from a plurality of visual sources;
 - a second apparatus comprising a touch screen display panel operable to simultaneously playback more than one stream of visual data from the storage unit and to produce an output; a touch screen graphical panel for the retrieval of digital video effects from a digital video effects register; and a control panel in communication with the touch screen panels, the control panel including a plurality of programmable keys, each one of which is able to be programmed with a retrieved digital video effect; whereby playback of visual data from the storage unit is able to be modified by combination with a retrieved digital video effect;

whereby the first apparatus is operable to edit modified visual data with output from the second apparatus for transmission.

32. The system according to claim 31, wherein the first apparatus of the system further comprises a programmable panel in communication with the touch screen panels, the programmable panel having a plurality of programmable keys, each one of which is able to be programmed to retrieve a digital video effect.
33. The system according to claim 31 or claim 32, wherein the programmable panel of the first apparatus is positionable proximate the respective touch screen display panel.
34. The system according to claim 31 or claim 32, wherein the programmable panel of the first apparatus is incorporated into the respective touch screen display panel.
35. The system according to claim 31 or claim 32, wherein the programmable panel of the first apparatus is incorporated into a control panel that enables switching between visual sources.
36. The system according to any one of claims 32 to 35, wherein the output is modified or unmodified visual data.
37. The system according to any one of claims 31 to 36, wherein the touch screen graphical panel of the second apparatus has control over one or more of the plurality of programmable keys on the control panel of the first apparatus for the execution of video effects or for defining video clips and playlists.
38. The system according to any one of claims 37 when dependent on claim 36, wherein the second apparatus is operable to edit modified visual data with output from the first apparatus.
39. The system according to any one of claims 31 to 38, wherein the selected data is modifiable by finger pressure on a portion of the touch screen graphical panel that is associated with the digital video effect.

40. The system according to any one of claim 37 when dependent on claim 36, wherein the selected data is modifiable by use of a programmable key, or directly from the touch screen graphical panel.
41. The system according to any one of claims 31 to 40, further comprising central control unit panels which are provided for each camera to ensure that that camera's vision has correct exposure and colourimetry.
42. The system according to any one of claims 31 to 41, further comprising an audio mixing panel to combine audio sources into completed program.
43. A method for broadcast control comprising the steps of:
storing digital video effects in a digital video effects register;
displaying on a touch screen display panel of a first apparatus visual data simultaneously in real-time from a plurality of visual sources; a first operator selecting visual data from at least one of the visual sources by finger pressure on the associated portion of the touch screen display panel of the first apparatus; the first operator
retrieving a digital video effect from the digital video effects register; and the first operator
modifying the selected visual data with the retrieved digital video effect to produce a first output and cueing the first output for transmission.
44. The method according to claim 43, further comprising a second set of steps including:
storing visual data from at least a portion of the plurality of visual sources; a first operator
replaying streams of stored visual data simultaneously on a touch screen display panel of a second apparatus ; a second operator
selecting a stream of visual data by finger pressure on the associated portion of the touch screen display panel of the second apparatus; the second operator
retrieving a digital video effect from a digital video effects register; the second operator
modifying the selected visual data with the digital video effect to produce a second output; and the first operator
cueing the second output relative to the first output to create a sequence for transmission.

45. The method according to claim 44, whereby the second set of steps are applied whenever the first operator is wanting to insert historic video footage into live footage.
46. The method according to claim 44, whereby the first operator instructs the second operator to source a particular piece of footage and modify it with a particular transition such that the first operator is able to create a sequence of footage for broadcast transmission.
47. The method according to any one of claims 44 to 46, whereby all the visual data from the sources is stored.
48. The method according to any one of claims 43 to claim 47, whereby the step of the first operator retrieving a digital video effect comprises the operator activating a touch screen graphical panel or activating a key programmed with the digital video effect.
49. The method according to claim 48, whereby the second operator, or a third operator is responsible for pre-programming the key with the digital video effect.
50. The method according to any one of claims 43 to claim 49, whereby the first operator is responsible for programming the key during operation.
51. The method according to claim 49 or 50, whereby the first or second operator personalises the key by accessing the touch screen graphical panel.
52. The method according to any one of claims 43 to claim 51, further including the step of configuring or re-configuring the touch screen display panel of a first apparatus to display the plurality of visual sources.
53. The method according to any one of claims 44 to claim 52, whereby the first operator effects a transition by finger pressure on the associated portion of the touch screen display panel representative of one source dragging that source to another portion of the touch screen display panel representative of another source.
54. The method according to any one of claims 44 to 47, 49 or 53, whereby the first operator and second operator access the same digital video effects register.

55. The method according to any one of claims 44 to 47, 49 or 53, whereby the first operator and second operator access different digital video effects registers.

56. The method according to any one of claims 44 to 47, 49 or 53 to 55, whereby created sequences are transmitted live or stored for broadcast at a later date.

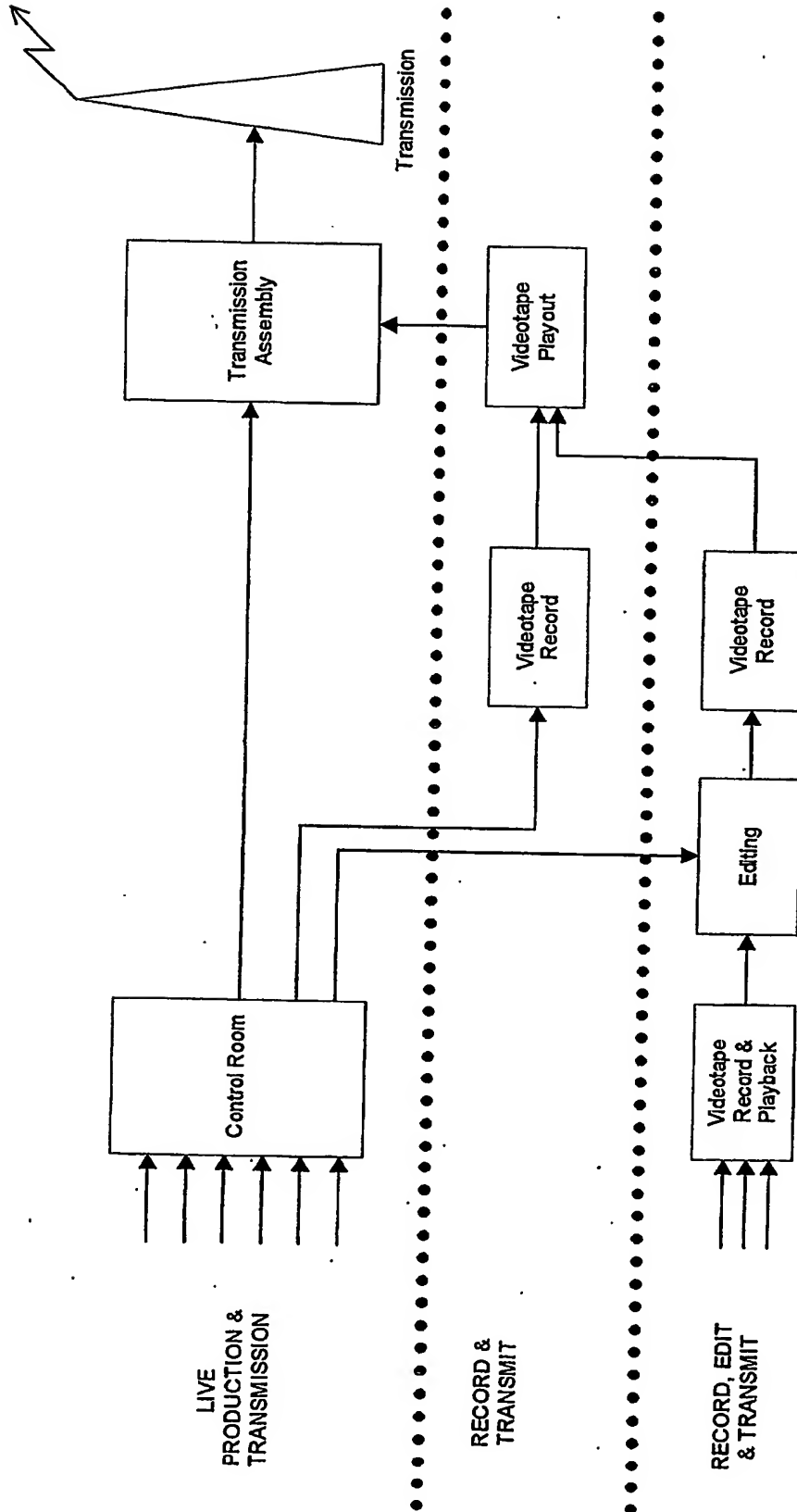


Fig. 1

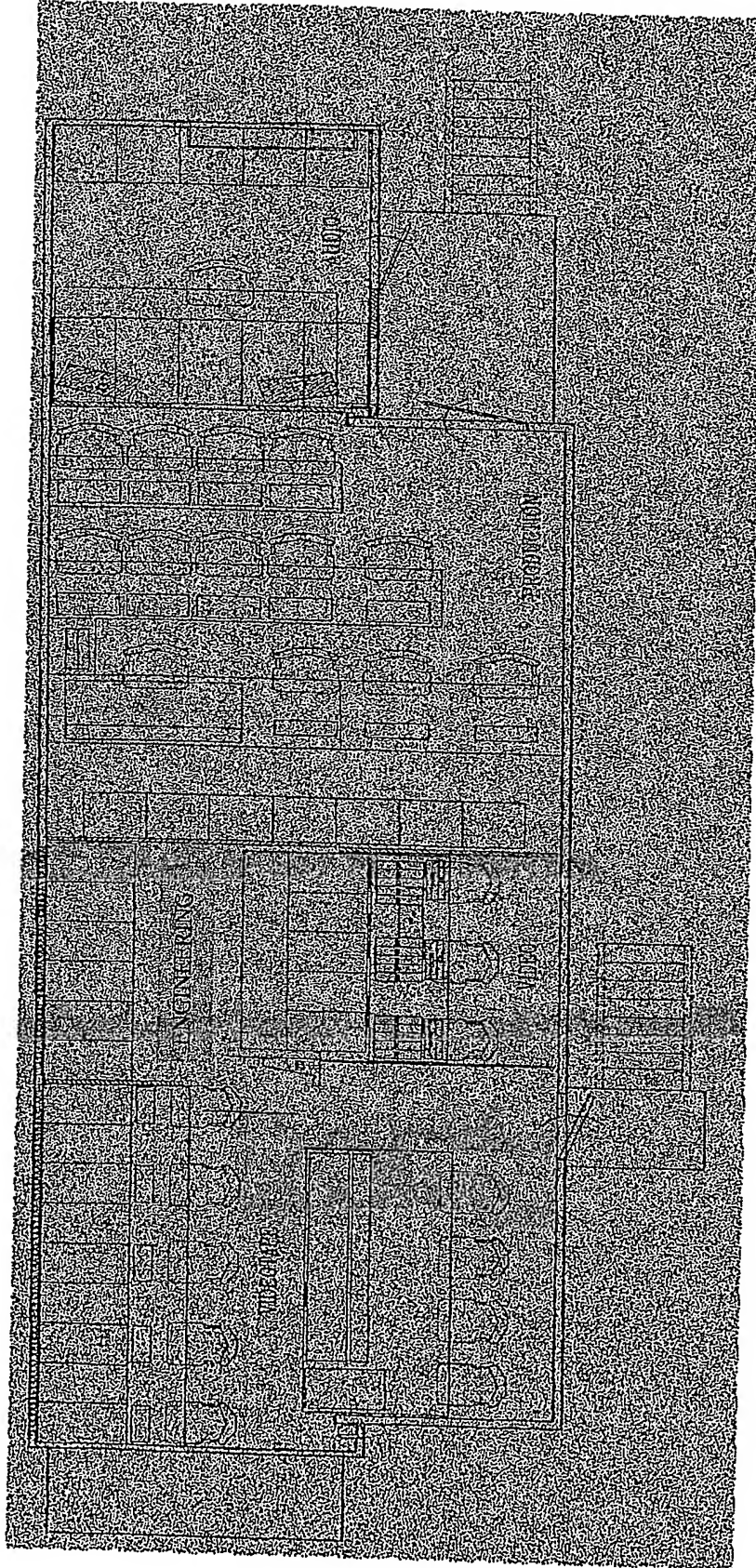


Fig. 2

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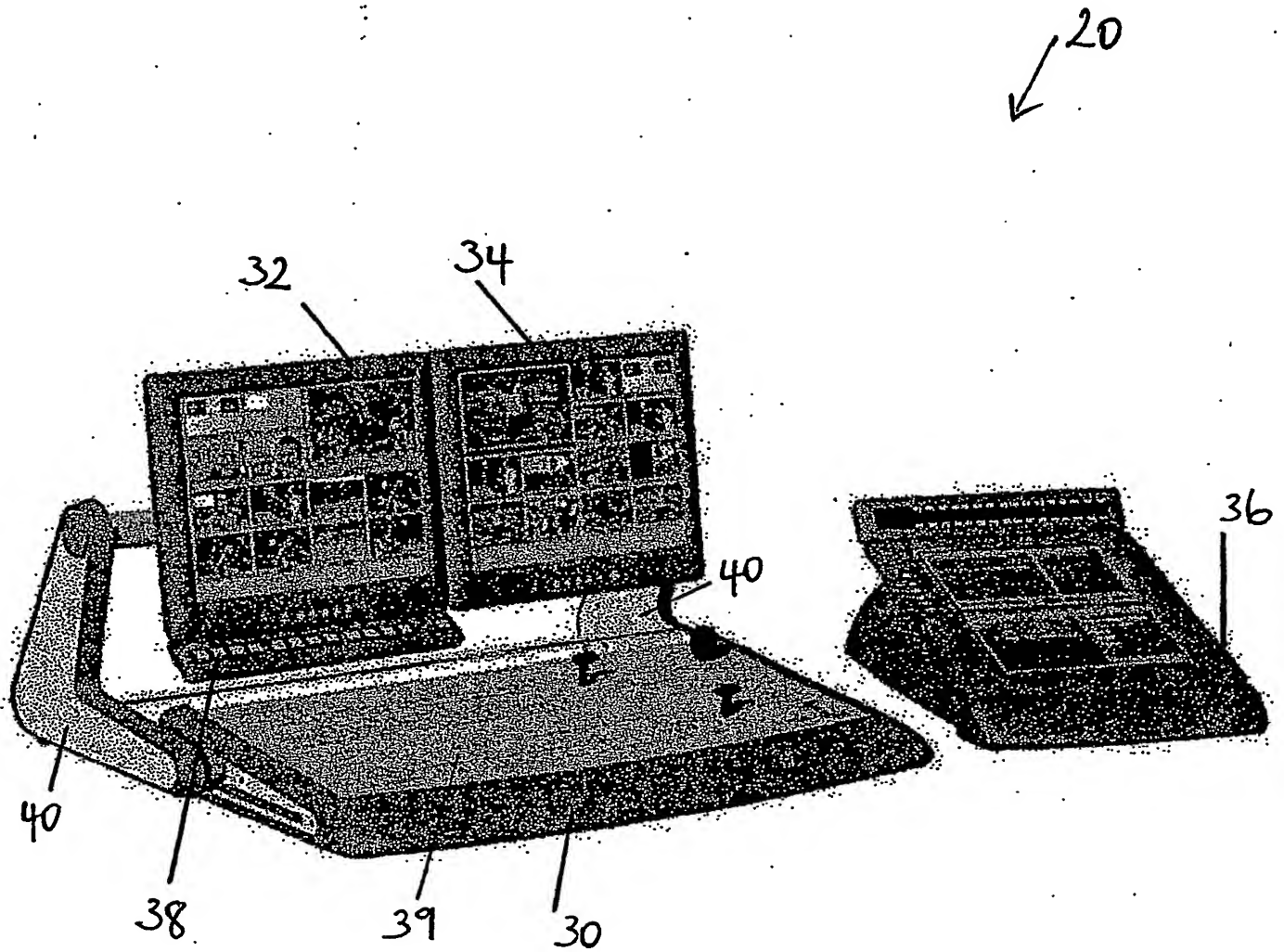


Fig. 3a

20

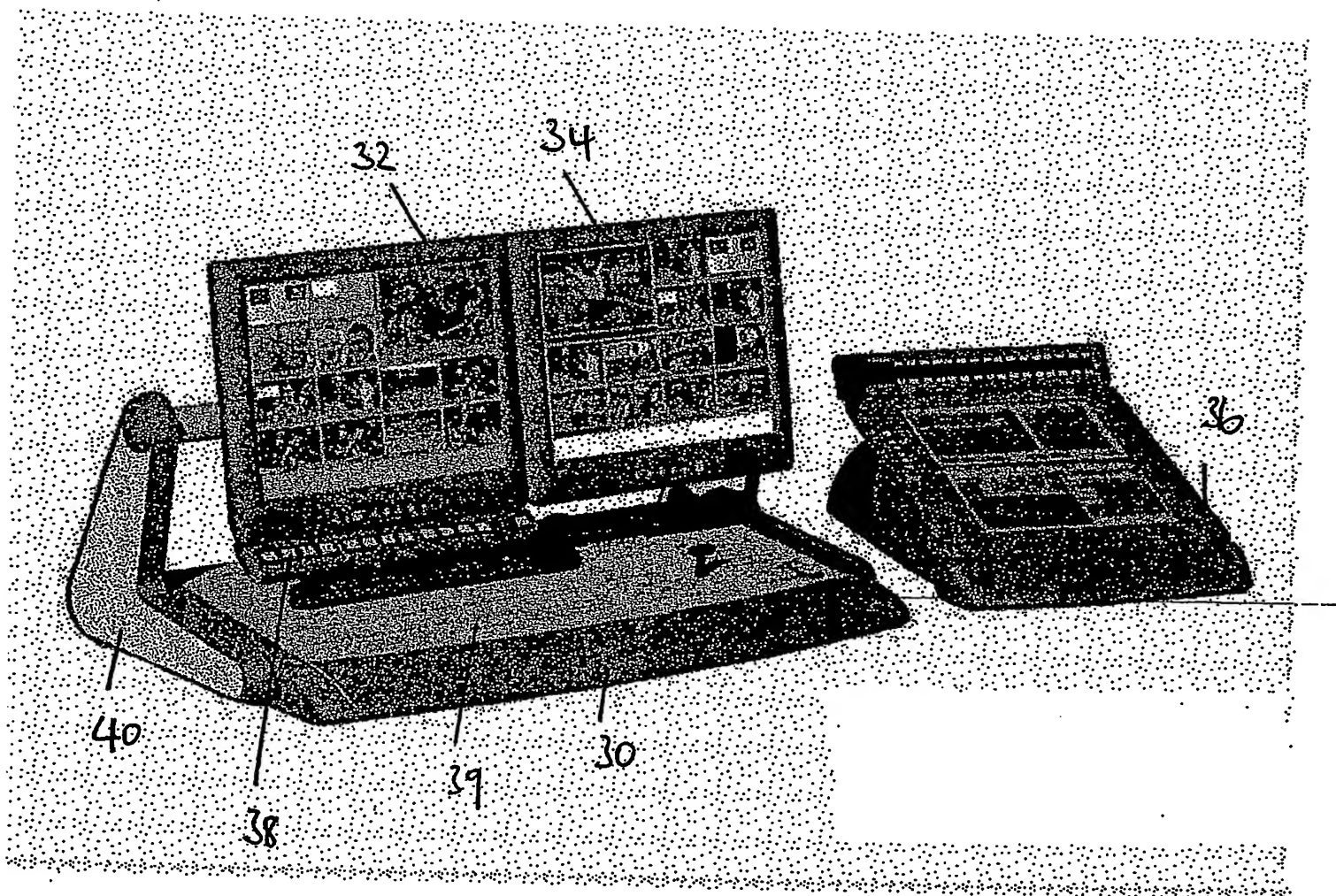


Fig. 3b

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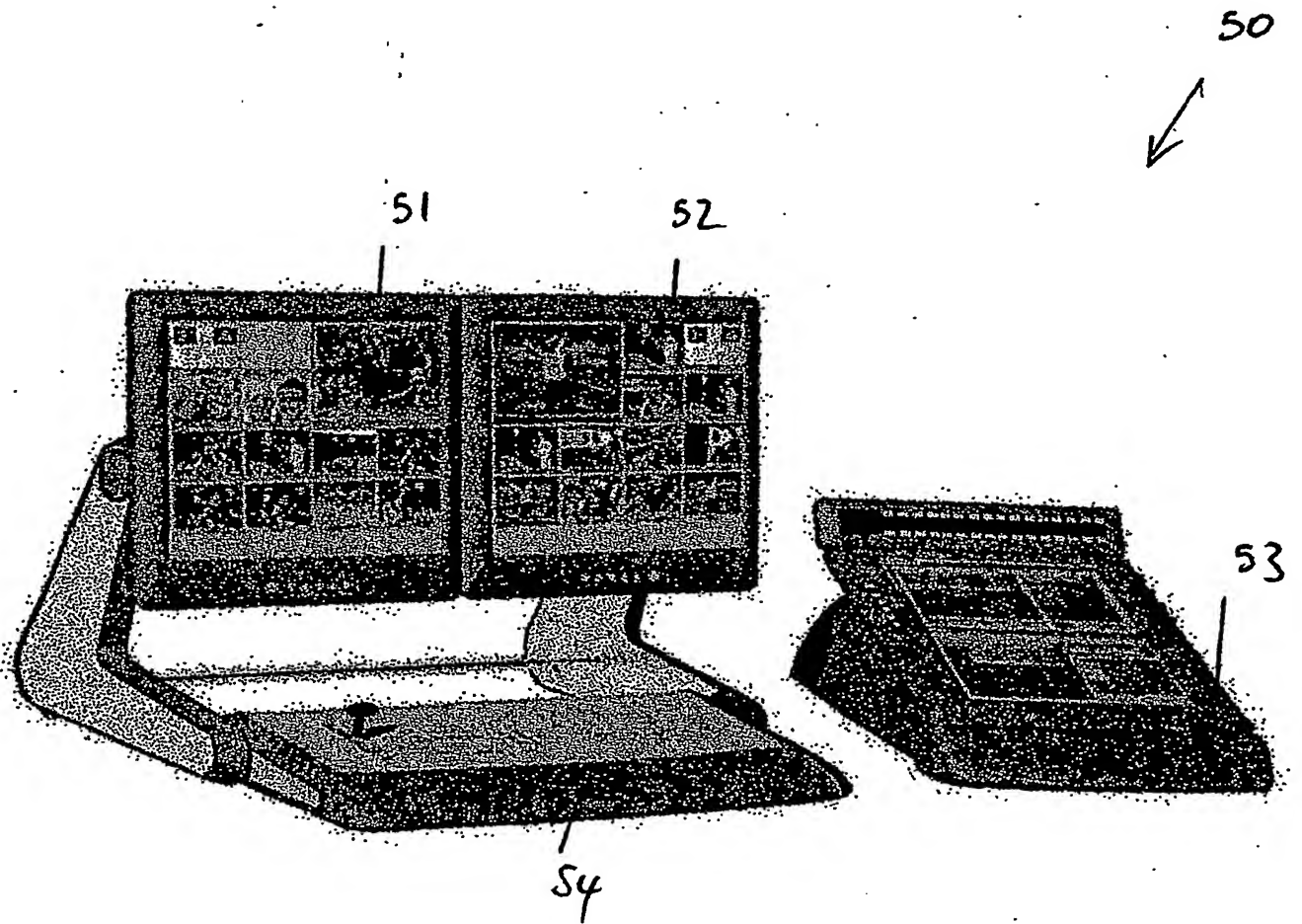


Fig. 4

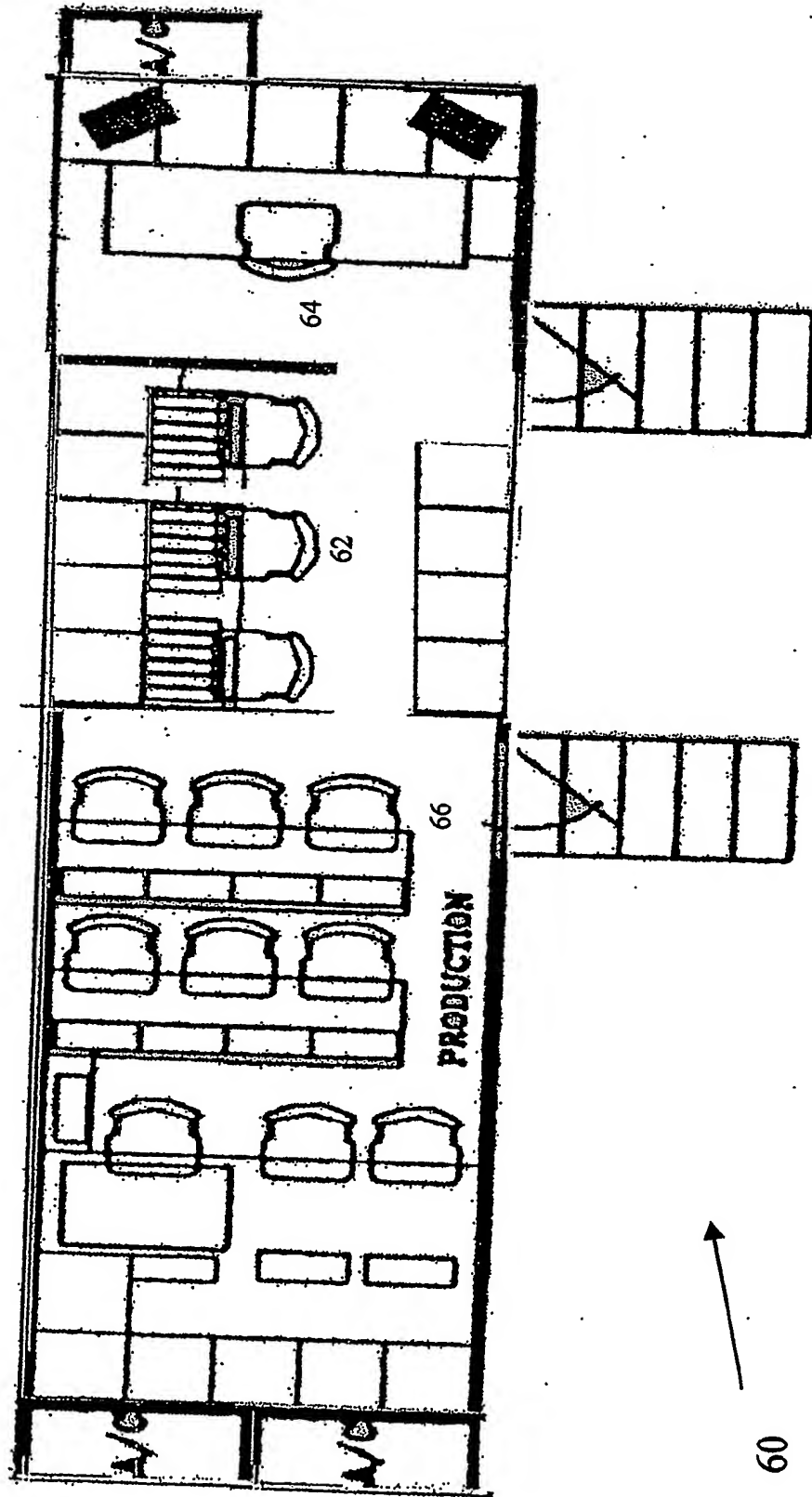


Fig. 5

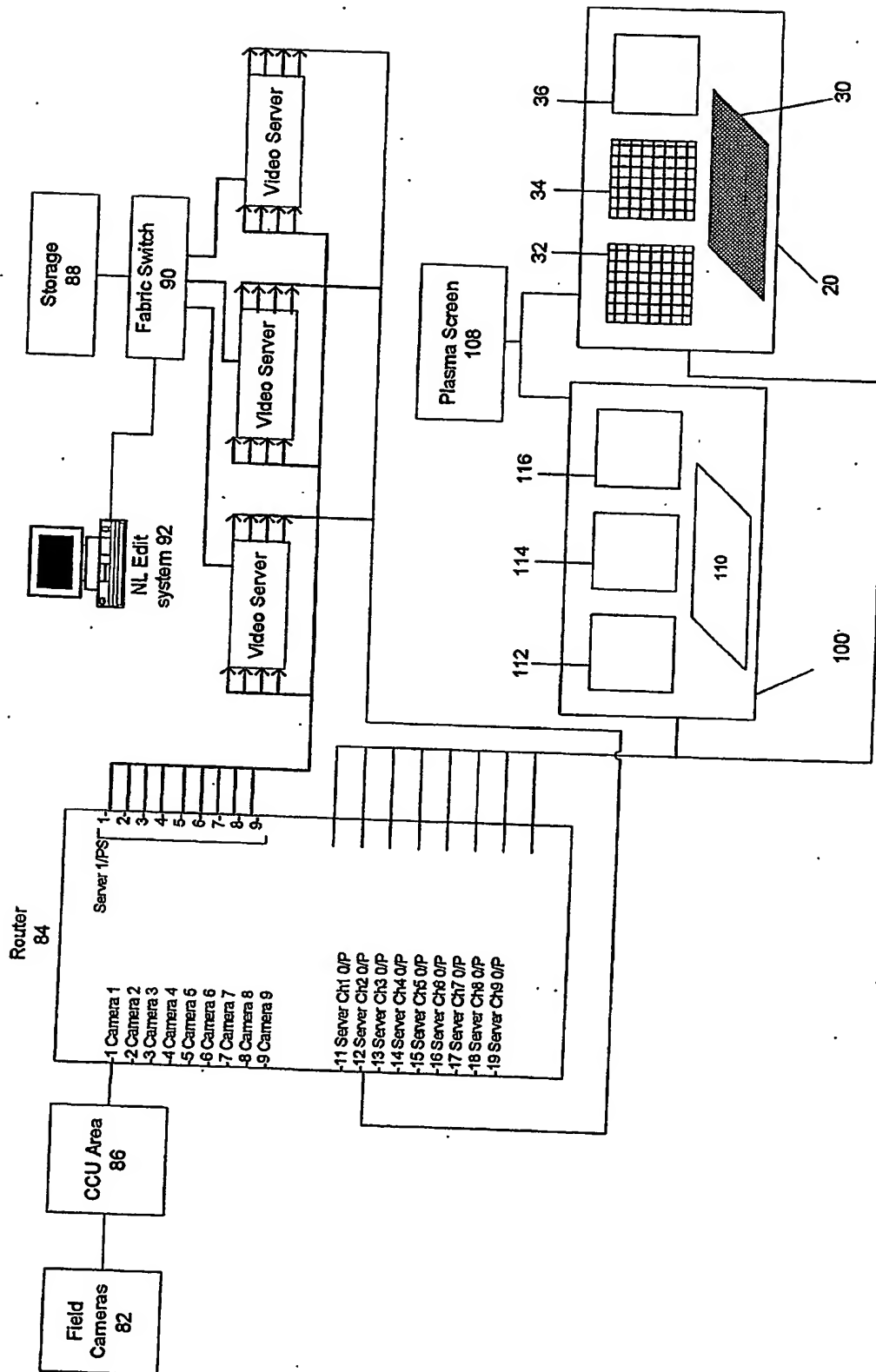


Fig. 6

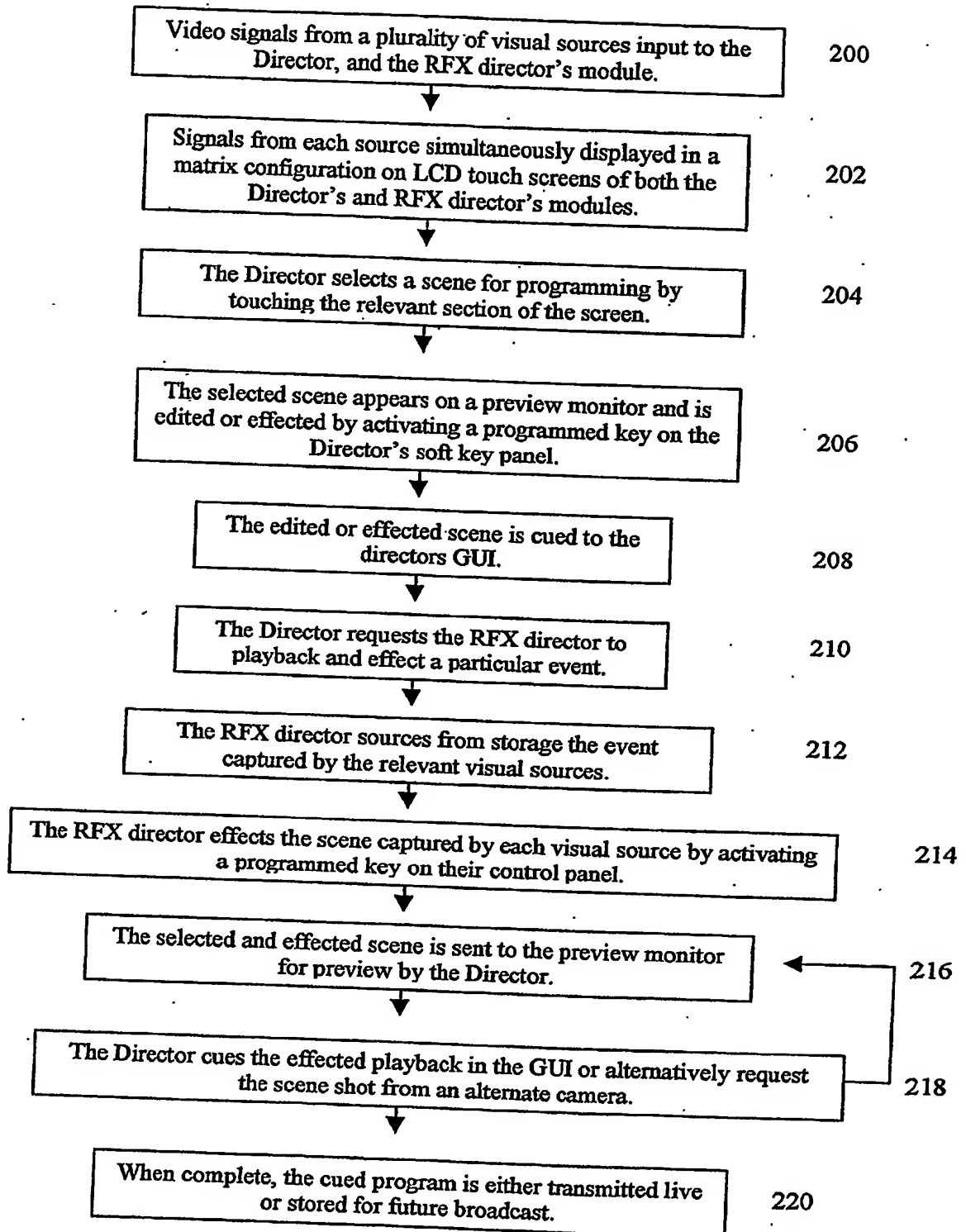


Fig. 7